



Food Assistance (Food Stamps)

Public Affairs Contact: Roger Munns (515) 281-4848 E-mail rmunns@dhs.state.ia.us

Purpose

The Food Assistance program (the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) provides nutrition to low-income Iowans and also benefits retail and agricultural economies.

Who

In June 2010, a record 346,551 people received benefits, a 14.2 percent increase from June 2009. Of all people receiving benefits:

- 63,732 (18 percent) received food assistance but no other state benefit.
- 282,819 (82 percent) received other government aid, mostly Medicaid. Some received Family Investment Program (cash) benefits. See separate summaries on these topics.

What

- The average household benefit was \$280 a month in SFY 2010.
- Eligibility and benefits are based on federal rules that consider size of household, number of people eating together, income, resources, household expenses, and other variables.
- Benefits are funded 100 percent with federal dollars. The cost of administering the program is shared 50-50 with states.

How are We Doing?

- Among more recent service improvements: the department added a customer call center (February 2005), used wireless technology to provide access at farmers markets (May 2005), added an on-line application that can be submitted by computer at www.oasis.iowa.gov (May 2007), and excluded child support paid to determine eligibility (February 2009).
- Benefits in Iowa and nationwide were increased about 13.6 percent in April 2009 due to the federal economic stimulus plan. Benefits will remain at current levels until 2014.
- In early 2011, the household income threshold for eligibility will be increased to 160 percent of federal poverty level. It has been 130 percent for many years.
- About \$509.5 million in federal food assistance funds were brought into the Iowa economy in SFY 2010, a 33.9 percent one-year increase. The USDA estimates that \$5 in food assistance generates \$9.20 in local and state economic activity.

